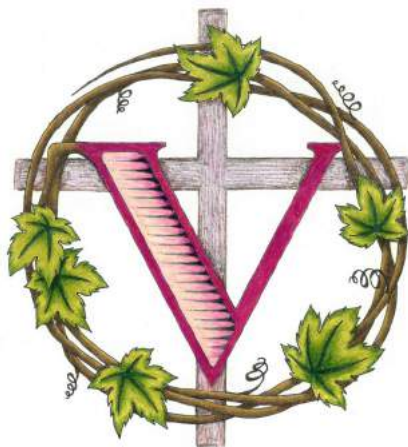


THE



INE

Spring 2022

WHATEVER WE DO, WE DO IT FOR GOD...

by Reverend Sue Lawler

When I was superintendent in the Welshpool Bro Hafren Circuit, I prayed a great deal about the shortage of people coming forward to lead worship. In discussing the preaching plan and the future of the circuit I would often comment: "I don't believe that God has stopped calling people to preach". For nearly five years I prayed for God to raise up new preachers for and from our churches. Then, just before I was due to leave the circuit, four people came forward, two showing interest in becoming Worship Leaders, and two being called to become Local Preachers.

I never got to walk with them on their journey or see them as they came to the end of their training. Nevertheless, I am delighted to know that my prayers were answered, maybe not when I wanted, but I'm sure God has reasons.

Now, I see the same thing happening with the circuit magazine. Ever since I came to GHAV circuit, I have wanted to start a circuit magazine, but without administrative help there just wasn't the capacity to do it. Prayers were frequently made for both an administrator and a circuit magazine. Eventually the prayers for an administrator were answered, and Joanna took up

(Continued on Page 13)

It is with great pleasure that the Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit welcomes you to **The Vine**, our brand new circuit magazine! As some of you will know, **The Vine** has been available to Rev Steve Boxall's churches for a while now in a slightly different format, but we are so excited to be able to expand and change, to reach the whole circuit.

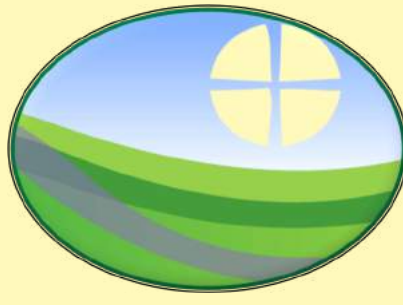
The magazine will be published quarterly, and will contain, among other things, a lead article from one of our ministers, news of upcoming events across the circuit, as well as projects that connect us with our communities. There is more information on how you can get involved on Page 4.

Other than that, the content Dear Reader, will be largely down to you—we want to feature your journeys with the Lord, **your** passions and musings, anything that will serve to glorify our Lord and connect us as brothers and sisters across the Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit!

The Vine Editorial Team: Rev Sue Lawler, Rev Steve Boxall, Joanna Saunders, Celia Price

If you would like to receive THE VINE in digital format (as an attachment in an email) please contact admin@gwenthillsandvales.org.uk





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DATES FOR THE DIARY...

7th MAY - FAIRHILL

2pm Opening of Community Garden

15th MAY - BLACKWOOD

4pm Big Sing

1st JUNE - PONTYPOOL MARKET

10.30am Chaplaincy 7th Birthday and Jubilee
Celebration

4th JUNE - TRINITY

2pm Jubilee Event

5th JUNE - CASTLE STREET

10.30am Service, followed by Jubilee Bring-and-
Share Lunch

5th JUNE - GLASBURY

3pm Jubilee Strawberry Tea

5pm Service (**please note the time change**)

9th JUNE - LLANYRAFON CHURCH

7pm Circuit Meeting

31st JULY - CASTLE STREET

4pm Farewell Service for Rev Sue Lawler

GWENT HILLS AND VALES CIRCUIT ZOOM SERVICE

Every Sunday evening, 6pm. Here's the link:

<https://zoom.us/j/94168420492?pwd=cjFTbzZUejhwTFBtVXdnL1lFVkdIdz09>

Meeting ID: 941 6842 0492

Passcode: 831858

All information in this publication shared with permission

For all contributions, questions or comments regarding The Vine, please contact:

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07752 487 624

Deadline for items to be included in the Summer issue: May 9, 2022

GOD FOR ALL

As you are reading and, hopefully enjoying our first edition of **The Vine** as a circuit magazine, just take a minute to pause, breathe deeply, and contemplate how you would answer the following questions:

- How are you feeling - as an individual; as a church?
- What's one thing you absolutely love about your local church?
- What's something you love about the community your church is in?
- If you could ask God for one capacity, for you; for your church to be developed, what would it be?

At our Circuit Leadership meeting in January, which included not only the team but also a number of guests, we were invited to answer these questions in conversation with **Rev Trey Hall**, Director of Evangelism and Growth for the Methodist Connexion (*pictured above*). He was there to share with us more about “**God for All**”, the Connexional Strategy designed to help all of us take steps deeper into the Gospel vision, about expanding ministry and mission in ourselves. His team seeks to walk alongside folks across the Connexion, not as experts but to deepen our walk to be the church God wants us to be.

As you can imagine, our responses to these questions were quite varied, maybe even a little predictable as we talked about being frustrated, tired, even optimistic; loving our church families and the worship, the resilience and neighbourliness of our communities, and feeling like we lacked confidence, vision, energy or love.

Trey listened attentively, validating our feelings and encouraging us as we became more open, reminding us that as Christians we are each



called to be a bearer and sharer of the Gospel.

If we are meant to carry the Gospel, we have to be able to talk about what it actually is, but even then, that is only one part of evangelism. We also have to be able to explain our good news in such a way that our hearers can relate to it; we have to know the context into which we are sharing.

So imagine you're in a queue at the supermarket, wearing a badge that says “Gospel-Bearer” on it. The person in line behind you asks what it means. After you explain, they respond with, “*That was beautiful. The last two years have been really awful - what difference has it made to your life over that time?*” Their question reflects the context - it has to mean something to them personally.

Ministry and mission happen when Gospel and context come together. At that meeting point, there is a vortex where the Holy Spirit swirls and moves. One of the dangers with any strategy and mission plan is that we launch right into “*What are we going to do?*”. If our action isn't rooted in a long season of wrestling with discernment, then it can be rooted in just that - action.

Here therefore, are two more questions for you to ponder:

**What is the Gospel?
What is our context?**

(Continued on Page 5)

**TAKE YOUR
NEXT STEPS IN
EVANGELISM
AND GROWTH**





When I was a teenager in the late seventies/early eighties, our youth group made the trip each May to attend the MAYC weekend in London. **The Methodist Association of Youth Clubs** was the youth arm of the Methodist Church, and these three days were an annual highlight. In the months leading up to the weekend itself, we had sponsored walks, discos and once even put on a pantomime, to raise money. While there we were hosted by a church in Croydon, where our then-minister Rev Tom Drew used to serve. There was lots of singing, worship, noise, and a sea of green and yellow – the MAYC colours. Good memories of my formative steps in the Christian faith, shared I am sure, by many others.

Those years feel like another lifetime, but the work among our precious young people continues. In the 21st century, the MAYC has become **3Generate**¹, the children and youth assembly of the Methodist Church, which works hard to give a voice to young people, enabling them to grow in their faith and become a real part of Christ's body in their own right.

There is still a weekend gathering every year in the autumn, complete with immersive activities for every age and interest. It encourages those attending to expect to encounter God everywhere – through physical activities and sport, creative and performing arts, quiet contemplation and discussion, debate, and acting as Agents of Change in the world. This culminates in making a Sunday morning 'covenant' – a promise to try to act on what they have heard and experienced throughout the weekend.

The Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit has a vibrant group of young people in Pontnewynydd Church, and 29th – 30th October, they were blessed to be at the weekend, which

(Continued on Page 10)

HELP WANTED!

Any budding journalists out there? Frustrated photographers? (Sorry, couldn't resist!) If you are not that way inclined, but still want to help, we are forming an editorial team and there are lots of ways in which you can get involved:

- ◆ Content - articles, poems, puzzles...
- ◆ Graphics - photos, drawings...
- ◆ Ideas - keeping "an ear to the ground" for interesting stories...
- ◆ Distribution in your church
- ◆ Collation - folding, stuffing envelopes etc. *(This will happen at the Circuit Office in Castle Street)*

There may be something that occurs to you as you read, that we haven't mentioned! Our contact details are on Page 2—hopefully the next issue won't be quite so big, or have quite so much of the same writer!

We are beginning with mostly hard copy, but **if you would prefer or be willing to receive The Vine via email**, please let us know by contacting Joanna with your name, email address and church - GDPR dictates that we need your permission to send it to you electronically. It will also be published on our circuit website -

Gwent Hills and Vales Methodist Circuit

Thanks Everyone for your support!

**Your Editorial Team (so far),
Sue, Steve, Joanna and Celia**

IN PARTNERSHIP FOR MUSICAL OUTREACH!

Blaenau Gwent Methodist Church are developing an exciting project with the **Abertillery Town Band**. We have forged a strong partnership, with a shared passion for outreach, and a will to contribute to the building of a resilient community, improving the health and well-being of the people who live on the church's doorstep.

The band has been working hard to raise funds and support for the development of a Brass Academy at the church, primarily for young people, to teach them brass and percussion in a safe social environment. We want to offer lively and uplifting tuition, providing not only musical development, but also the opportunity to build their confidence and social skills; also career opportunities! We are working with the local schools and Upbeat Music and Arts¹ - together we will provide workshops and tuition which are fun and engaging!

Our plan is to open the Academy to our community at least once every month, for a concert given by the young people. Local residents who may be feeling lonely and isolated, perhaps even frail and vulnerable, will

benefit from attending the church for entertainment, support and refreshments, and there will be amazing opportunities for inter-generational relationship building.

We are currently busy developing the church building to ensure that it is fit for purpose. This entails demolishing and re-building the extension, internal reconfiguration, installing energy-efficient systems and general maintenance. Ambitious? Yes! But we are confident in the Lord, and, thanks to circuit funding, have engaged an architect to help us design the build. We are so grateful to the Circuit Leadership Team, who have acknowledged the plan as a different but sustainable approach, with Blaenau Gwent planning a building not only for worship and fellowship, but also for community use. Invigorating times!

(Continued on Page 9)



GOD FOR ALL

(Continued from Page 3)

zones into mission and evangelism in our communities, in a way that costs us something.

That's the invitation. If we're faithful, sharing our deepest gladness to meet the world's deepest hunger, we might see more people becoming disciples of Jesus Christ, faith deepening for all of us, churches and communities experiencing Gospel transformation!

Joanna Saunders, with soundbytes by Trey Hall



For Methodist ministers, a sabbatical is a period of release from ordinary ministerial duties for the purpose of pursuing an approved programme of study, research, work or experience. It is intended as a time for re-equipping, refreshment and renewal. Sabbaticals are normally taken every seven years and are part of the discipline of the Methodist Church for every minister.

I intend to use my Sabbatical to advance my understanding and awareness of the New Testament's importance, reliability, and place in history. My primary aim is to increase my proficiency in koine Greek¹ grammar and vocabulary. I am largely self-taught in basic Greek, and so undertaking a course providing a more intense, systematic and guided approach to further study of the original language of the New Testament will be beneficial. A sabbatical provides opportunity for this, free from the distractions inherent in active pastoral ministry. My goal is to translate the first three chapters of John's Gospel!

In addition, I plan to extend my knowledge and praxis of New Testament Textual Criticism². As part of this, I hope to undertake a tour of a selection of extant Greek New Testament manuscripts from the 2nd century to the early 5th century. Travel restrictions permitting, I hope to arrange viewings of manuscripts and fragments at the British Library (chiefly, Codex Sinaiticus, the oldest complete copy of the New Testament) and the John Rylands Library in Manchester (chiefly, Papyrus P52 – a fragment of John's Gospel which is regarded as the earliest portion of any New Testament writing ever found).

The official start date of my sabbatical is Monday, 16th May. I am grateful that Rev Sue Lawler has volunteered to act as cover for the first half of my time away, with other staff colleagues covering the final few weeks. I hope to let you know more about my time "away", in the Autumn issue of **The Vine**.

¹ **Koine Greek** or Common Greek, was the common language of the Mediterranean world in the first century. (www.gotanswers.org)

Rev Dr Gareth Edwards

² **New Testament Textual Criticism** is the identification of textual variants, or different versions of the New Testament, whose goals include identification of transcription errors, analysis of versions, and attempts to reconstruct the original text. Its main focus is studying the textual variants in the New Testament. (*Wikipedia*)

FAIRHILL COMMUNITY GARDEN

If you are seeking a little respite from the hustle and bustle of the daily grind, a space has been created within our circuit where you might just find some. It's the Community Garden at Fairhill Methodist Church, a concept long-desired, that has just recently come to fruition, if you'll pardon the pun.

The original vision was conceived a good many years ago, and was that of a sensory garden, but faced with financial and planning obstacles, nothing moved forward. Questions asked by the National Lottery in response to an application for funding raised more questions that led the church family to a radical rethink.

The congregation went out into the community to try and gauge interest in the plan and were pleasantly surprised by the response. Local folk had been given a say in the original design, and were still on board. With that first plan tweaked, planning



Photo: Chris Timm

Continued on Page 12

CHURCHES OF GWENT HILLS AND VALES CIRCUIT



ABERTILLERY
BEAUFORT HILL
BEDWAS
BLACKWOOD
BLAENAU GWENT
BLAINA
CASTLE STREET
CWMCELYN
FAIRHILL
GARNDIFFAITH
GLASBURY
HOPE
LLANELLY HILL
LLANYRAFON
NANTYGLO
PONTLLANFRAITH
PONTNEWYNYDD
PONTYPOOL
RACE
ST JAMES
TREDEGAR
TRINANT
TRINITY
TYLLWYN
UPPER CWMBRAN
WESLEY PLACE

R	L	L	A	N	E	L	L	Y	H	I	L	L	G	Q	L	O	O	P	Y	T	N	O	P
Z	W	B	V	H	T	I	A	F	F	I	D	N	R	A	G	R	O	X	N	B	O	A	G
X	Y	D	L	M	D	M	C	W	Q	A	U	A	A	T	W	A	D	B	W	P	B	H	D
W	T	O	C	J	Q	T	L	L	A	N	Y	R	A	F	O	N	H	G	O	E	N	K	L
A	K	R	E	A	O	Q	S	M	B	L	A	C	K	W	O	O	D	N	R	U	P	U	B
D	V	P	I	S	S	Q	A	I	P	X	C	T	S	A	A	S	T	T	K	O	D	T	L
Q	O	R	E	N	Z	T	Z	S	T	A	R	E	B	E	I	L	I	W	N	C	N	P	A
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Y	U	S	R	Y	S	Z	V	P	S	T	R	W	Q	K	N	E	S	S	L	B	G	B	R
Z	C	U	O	I	Z	Y	O	C	L	U	C	S	D	V	N	S	E	M	A	J	T	S	T
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E	I	P	S	D	F	R	V	Y	X	P	G	H	K	F	A	I	R	H	I	L	L	D	L
H	U	U	J	S	S	D	X	Q	D	W	Q	Q	G	H	T	Q	J	V	W	B	V	K	U

Puzzle created by Joanna
using wordmint.com

IN
PARTNER-
SHIP...

Continued from Page 4 and
concluded on Page 10

*l-r, Siân Millar, David
Powell - Upbeat Music, Nigel
Bard and Alun Williams,
respectively Chairman and
Conductor
of Abertillery Town Band*





I'm sure Her Majesty the Queen would be delighted to learn that as she is celebrating her 70th year as monarch in June, a much smaller, but no less significant milestone will be marked in south Wales - the 7th birthday of the Pontypool Indoor Market Chaplaincy!

For those of you who are new to our readership, in March 2015 Llanyrafon

Methodist Church hosted a series of meetings which encouraged us to take the church out of our buildings to go "beyond these walls" during Outreach Week, 21st – 27th June. As a result of this, my friend **Julie Blake** and I made the decision to explore a chaplaincy at Pontypool Indoor Market.

Our first outreach was on 24th June from 9am - 4pm. Things moved slowly, but we were able to hold a Carol Service during Advent of that year. After we assisted at a Macmillan Coffee Morning¹, we undertook more of our own events, with a highlight last December being a Carol Singing event which was very well supported by the local church community. As in previous years, the carols were chosen by the traders - Shane Kennedy, the current manager, even recorded us live!

Since our beginnings, we have seen a few managers come and go (we are grateful for the support of one constant member of staff in the office), and have gradually built up our relationship with the management and traders. It is for them that we exist - to encourage, support and pray; hence the reason we visit on every second **Tuesday** of the month, rather than busier Wednesdays.

Before Covid interrupted our lives, we were pleased to welcome **Eileen Lock** and, more recently, **Kay Ford** to this ministry - valuable assets to valuable work! We have been made welcome at the market and feel it a privilege to be able to support the traders in any way required.

Little did we realise seven years ago, that we would still be at the market today, and we give God the glory. We thank Him for all that is past and trust Him for all that's to come. We pray that this will inspire you in your corner of the Gwent Hills and Vales Circuit to go "**beyond these walls**", to serve our Lord and Saviour!



Carol singing in Pontypool Market, December 2021

Celia Price, on behalf of the team: Julie Blake, Eileen Lock and Kay Ford

¹World's Biggest Coffee Morning 2022 | Macmillan Cancer Support

*"Ministry and mission happen
when Gospel and context come together."*

Rev Trey Hall



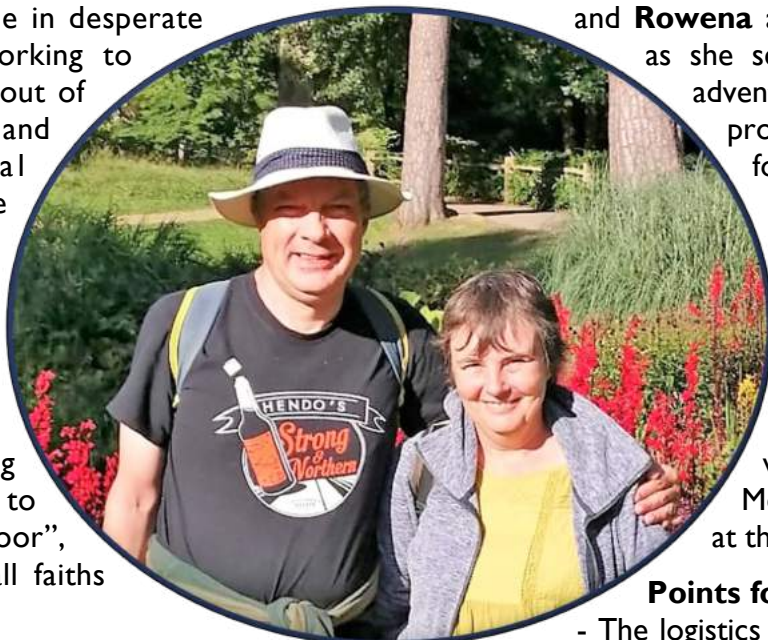
Founded in 1978 by Don and Deyon Stephens, **Mercy Ships**¹ is a faith-based, international development organisation that deploys hospital ships to some of the poorest countries in the world, delivering vital, free healthcare to people in desperate need. It is also working to effectively do itself out of a job, by training and mentoring local healthcare professionals and improving healthcare infrastructure. Mercy Ships seeks to follow the model of Jesus by “bringing hope and healing to the forgotten poor”, helping people of all faiths and none.

It was at Spring Harvest some years ago that Fairhill member and hospital pharmacist **Gillian Timm** (pictured, with husband Chris) first came across Mercy Ships, and immediately felt like it was something she wanted to do when she retired. That time has finally arrived: on 18th March, Gillian left the UK for Senegal, where she met the **Africa Mercy** (pictured right) for a three-month stint aboard ship in the hospital pharmacy, working with a small team, and living on the ship as part of

the international Christian community of volunteers. As well as the work itself, she is looking forward to making new friends and exploring Senegal during occasional time off.

During its 40-plus years of existence, Mercy Ships has served 55 countries, always working closely in a five-year partnership model with governments and health ministries to build relationships, ensuring that the needs of each country are most closely met. New Guinea is a great example of the efficacy of this approach - when the team returned for a second visit, they were expecting to have to perform about 200 cleft-palate surgeries. Thanks to the teaching the local healthcare providers received the first time around, there were only three cases!

Husband **Chris** and daughters **Amanda** and **Rowena** are fully behind Gillian as she sets out on this great adventure, although they are probably already looking forward to her return home June 12th! The story of her trip will feature in the Autumn issue of **The Vine**; in the meantime, for more information about the work and ministry of Mercy Ships, the link is at the end of this article.



Points for Prayer:

- The logistics - travelling mercies on the journey to Senegal and back.
- Resurrecting O-level French!
- Openness to whatever the Lord has to show and teach Gillian during her time on board the **Africa Mercy**.

¹[Mercy Ships UK](http://MercyShipsUK.org) -
[International Surgical
Care Mission Charity](http://InternationalSurgicalCareMissionCharity.org)



Joanna Saunders,
in conversation with Gillian Timm

was held at Birmingham's NEC with a theme of "In Tune", exploring what it means to be in tune both with God and one another, and how we all have a part to play in the Body of Christ. They were encouraged by being in a space where everyone had the same objective, by the different kinds of worship and teaching, and where the youth themselves were actively leading



*Some of our young people
"making some noise" for God!*

and making choices. There comes a time in everyone's life when they must learn to choose their own path and determine their beliefs for themselves, independently of their parents. Encouragingly, our young people came away feeling like they had begun to take some ownership of their individual spiritual journeys.

The next gathering is 30th September - 2nd October, back in Birmingham. If you know a young person who you feel might enjoy being plugged into a group that is attending, or if you yourself would like to know how to get involved in the event, please get in touch, or check out the link following the article. And above all, please continue to pray for this valuable work, and for our young people, essential parts of our church bodies right now, today, and growing in grace towards the future!

¹[3Generate \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://3Generate(methodist.org.uk))

Joanna Saunders, in conversation with Lupe Tu'ipulotu

IN PARTNERSHIP FOR MUSICAL OUTREACH!

Continued from Page 7

There are a number of ways you can help:

- ♦ The scheme has been chosen by **The Co-op** as one of its national projects. So, if you are a Co-op member (it's only £1 to join this Fairtrade organisation) and purchase Co-op branded goods, you can choose this project to receive Co-op donations. The Co-op website² has the details of becoming a member – we hope we have lots of Methodist Co-op members in the Gwent Hills and Vales!

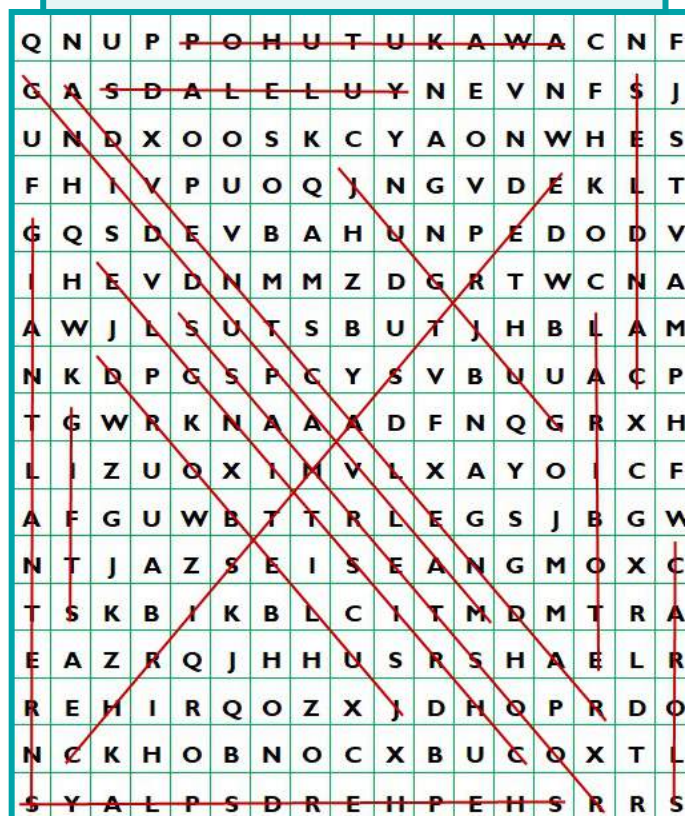
- ♦ Finally and most importantly, please pray for us! We are very excited about the direction in which God is leading us and want to stay true to **his** plans!

Siân Millar

¹ Upbeat Music and Arts Service Ltd

² [Co-op Membership - Membership that makes a difference - Co-op \(coop.co.uk\)](http://Co-op Membership - Membership that makes a difference - Co-op (coop.co.uk))

For those of you who received the last issue
of **The Vine**, here is the
WINTER ISSUE PUZZLE SOLUTION





Imagine for a moment visiting your local Aldi to pick up a donation for a local food bank. You're expecting a boxful of food, instead of which, the manager takes you to a room full of surplus and basically says, "Help yourself!" If you're thinking of Jesus' miracle of the feeding of the 5000 right now, you're bang on target, because you leave with **SEVEN** full shopping trolleys-worth of bread, **PLUS** nine boxes of food - meat, fish, produce, all sorts - crammed into your small car!!

That story isn't fiction - it actually happened to the lady at the centre of this article. When Sabrina Cresswell (*pictured*) began hosting dinner at her home for those who would otherwise be alone on Christmas Day, she had no idea that it would lead to her running her own non-profit organisation, helping needy folk access nutritious food, and helping the planet by reducing waste!

When Christmas lunch outgrew her home, Sabrina asked Llanyrafon Church for permission to host it there - bigger kitchen, more space, and inevitably, more people. Needing help with provisions, Sabrina reached out to **Neighbourly**¹, an organisation that coordinates local businesses with the needs of the community, to see if they could help. They connected her with local super-markets, who began donating. (This is where our opening story comes in!)

Then came the major interruption to all our lives in the form of Covid-19, and Sabrina signed



Part of the Tasty not Wasty set-up
at Llanyrafon Church

up as an official Torfaen volunteer, delivering shopping and medicine to folks who were shielding. The lockdown was having a negative impact on surplus food collections in the area, and Neighbourly phoned Sabrina, to see if they could still rely on her to pick up donations. On behalf of the church she readily agreed, and so picking up the supplies and delivering them to the local food banks became part of her already-busy schedule.

By August 2020, there was so much food that Sabrina decided the time had come to set up her own arrangement to get it to those who needed

Continued on Page 12

permission was obtained in 2019, and work finally got underway. The church secured funding, and was able to substantially cut costs by recycling paving from the front of the building to the back. Raised beds went in, amid discussions to get the local schools involved - they were keen - and to throw the garden open for **Incredible Edibles**: the community could sow, grow and pick the produce.

FAIRHILL COMMUNITY GARDEN

(Continued from Page 6)

Now that things are moving again post-pandemic, one of the schools is ready to “adopt” a few beds, spurred on by their enthusiastic caretaker. There are plans for expansion, including a small orchard. The hope is of course, that once the students are involved the parents will follow, leading to full community participation.

Please pray, thanking God for the beauty of his creation that we can all enjoy:



A sample of some of the first produce from the garden!
Photo: Amanda Timm

- For Fairhill Church, seeking to create links with the community through the garden.
- For future plans for the expansion of the project.
- **For the Grand Opening, Saturday, 7th May, 2pm – all are welcome!**

Even at this stage in its development, the garden contains the sights and sounds of God’s creation, the smells of flowers, earth, the outdoors, the feel of the soil, pulling up vegetables, planting tiny seeds. So it would seem that the original vision, once deferred, is truly coming to pass - there is indeed a sensory garden at Fairhill!

**Joanna Saunders,
in conversation with Jan Jackson**



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it most. She posted on the Facebook page of the group **A Journey to Zero Waste²**, asking for help to name the new community interest company³ (CIC), hence **Tasty not Wasty⁴**, and brought two other volunteers on board as directors. Just like Christmas lunch, the venture soon grew too big for Sabrina’s home, so once again, she applied to Llanyrafon Church for permission to use their premises, and it is there that you will find her every morning from Tuesday to Saturday with her team of helpers, serving the local community and reducing waste at the same time!

Sabrina has asked us to pray:

- For those in our communities who are needy; those who struggle with admitting that need, and who suffer anxiety because of an “I-don’t-deserve-it” mentality.
- For stronger partnerships between organisations who work to help.
- For the word to be spread that there is help out there!
- For a heightened awareness of food waste and the benefits to people when food is stewarded correctly.

**Joanna Saunders,
in conversation
with Sabrina Cresswell**

¹ **Neighbourly** can be found at [Neighbourly - where businesses help local good causes](#)

² **Journey to Zero Waste in the UK** can be found on Facebook

³ More information about **community interest companies** can be found on Wikipedia: [Community interest company - Wikipedia](#)

⁴ **Tasty not Wasty** can be found at [Tasty not Wasty CIC - Connect Torfaen](#), and on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter

WHATEVER WE DO, WE DO IT FOR GOD...

(Continued from Page 1)

her post in March 2021. Since then she has become a huge asset, as you will know. Things take time and patience is a virtue, and here I am again, just before leaving the circuit, seeing my prayers answered: we have a circuit magazine! I am delighted, and only sorry that I will not be the superintendent to have the joy of seeing it grow and blossom. But that doesn't matter.

There is plenty of reference in the Scriptures to sowing and reaping, seeds and harvest.

Particularly 1 Corinthians 3 comes to mind:

"What is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose, and each will receive wages according to the labour of each. For we are God's servants, working together; you are God's field, God's building."

1 Corinthians 3:6-9

Paul offers a helpful and timely reminder that it isn't all about **us**. If we sow seeds, we must do it for God and not for ourselves. If we reap a harvest, we must remember that it isn't for, or because of, us. It is God who gives the seeds, God who gives the water, God who gives the growth and God who gives the harvest. As we read in 2 Corinthians 9:10:

"He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of

your righteousness."

Sometimes God shares the joy of the harvest with us, sometimes with others, and sometimes we reap the joy of a harvest from someone else's sowing. No matter.

It seems to me that one reason for discouragement and disappointment as a Christian, is when we hold to unrealistic expectations. For example, we know God is faithful and we interpret that to mean that God will act on his faithfulness by doing what we want, when we want it, as if it is us who call the shots.

This is ridiculous of course, but it doesn't stop us doubting

God, when we go through hard times or when prayers are not answered in a way we can recognise. It is important for us to remember that whatever we do, we do it for God, and then there will be no discouragement. As Paul tells the people of Corinth:

"Therefore, my beloved, be steadfast, immovable, always excelling in the work of the Lord, because you know that in the Lord your labour is not in vain."

1 Corinthians 15: 58

So, don't give up praying, don't give up your good works, put your trust in God, for God will bring a bountiful harvest from your efforts. It's just that you may not get to see it!

I pray that the GHAV Magazine, **The Vine**, will be blessed, and be a blessing, well into the future. May it achieve what God wants and may it bring him glory.

Rev Sue Lawler



Photo: PB Avery, National Library of Wales



PRAY WITHOUT CEASING...

A PRAYER FOR UKRAINE¹

Holy and Gracious God,
We pray for the people of Ukraine and the people
of Russia; for their countries and their
leaders.
We pray for all those who are afraid;
that your everlasting arms hold them in this
time of great fear.
We pray for all those who have the power over life
and death;
that they will choose for all people life, and
life in all its fullness.
We pray for those who choose war;
that they will remember that you direct
your people to turn our swords into plough-
shares and seek for peace.
We pray for leaders on the world stage;
that they are inspired by the wisdom and
courage of Christ.
Above all, Lord, today we pray for peace for
Ukraine,
and we ask this in the name of your blessed
Son.
Lord have mercy.
Amen

¹ [Prayer for peace in Ukraine \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)

BENDITH

*Bydded i'r Tad gerdded gyda chwi yn
ffresni'r ardd,
Bydded i'r Mab gerdded gyda chwi ar
lwybr y mynydd,
Bydded i'r Ysbryd gerdded gyda chwi ar
ffordd y pererin,
Bendith y Tad, y Mab a'r Ysbryd a fo gyda
chwi yn wastad.
Amen.*

A blessing for God to walk with you in the
freshness of the garden, on the mountain path,
and on the way of pilgrimage.

- For all refugees and those displaced by war.
- For wisdom for our leaders - world, national and local.
- For the recently bereaved, and those dealing with loss.
- For those still struggling with the effects of the pandemic.
- For our Circuit, as we deal with upcoming changes.
- For Rev Catherine Brobbey, Rev Sue Lawler and all those preparing for transitions.
- For Rev Gareth Edwards, as he prepares for his sabbatical.
- For all the ministries and endeavours highlighted in this issue of **The Vine**.

A PRAYER FOR TONGA²

Loving God, we stand in awe at the power of creation seen in volcano and tsunami, recognising the smallness and weakness of our own existence. Yet you tell us that each person is special and important to you, and in that confidence we hold before you the people of Tonga as they deal with the aftermath of the volcanic eruption.

You know the feelings and needs of each person there, and we pray that you would grant calm and courage to those directly involved, and the strengthening of bonds as people support each other. Especially we ask for wisdom for national community and religious leaders as they look for a way ahead.

We pray also for the peace of your presence for our Tongan family here in south Wales.

We give thanks for the wider international community providing support to Tonga. Although now everything is dismal and grey from volcanic ash, may the people of Tonga be able to hold on to the hope of the return of colour and joy to their land.

Amen

² [A prayer for Tonga \(methodist.org.uk\)](http://methodist.org.uk)